



Business Start-Up Centre
Bitola

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PRESS RELEASE

USAID Support for Micro and Small Businesses in Pelagonia

Today, the USAID Business without Borders project shared its first-year successes in helping to create jobs, start new businesses and improve the competitiveness of existing enterprises in the Pelagonia region. The project, implemented by the Foundation Business Start-up Center - Bitola (BSC - Bitola), is a three-year effort to accelerate economic growth in southern Macedonia by assisting micro and small enterprises.

"I'm very pleased that the Business Start-Up Center in Bitola is now a USAID partner. They are providing critical financial and entrepreneurship assistance to small businesses and helping us extend our programs outside Skopje to support local economic development," said Joseph Lessard, USAID Economic Growth Office Director. "The initial accomplishments of this project are impressive. In the first year, 57 people got jobs, 33 new companies have been established, and an additional 33 have improved their performance since last year. Over 700 people improved their knowledge and skills through the trainings the Center offers throughout Pelagonia."

In 2012, USAID's project plans to provide support to 90 companies and create 100 new jobs. Based on the knowledge they gained through the project in 2011, the Center is further tailoring its approach to better meet regional needs. At today's gathering, the project gave local stakeholders the opportunity to discuss the development of micro and small enterprises in the region, identify areas for cooperation and present their proposals and suggestions for the economic development of the Pelagonia region.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The American people, through USAID, have invested over \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is working with the people of Macedonia to create jobs, strengthen democratic institutions and practices, enhance integrated education, and prepare students for the workforce. These initiatives improve the quality of life and support Macedonia's transition to a stable and prosperous democracy. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov> or our Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/USAIDMacedonia>